

A *WHALE* OF A TOKEN!!

Recently, your editor was able to complete his set of whaling tokens issued by Compañía Argentina de Pesca for use at Grytviken, South Georgia Island, obtaining the 50 Ore and 5 Kroner. While the 10 ore appears “relatively” common, it is only common compared to the other tokens in the set. The 50 ore and 1 Krone are very rare. From all indications, the 5 Kroner is unique. Considering that wages were from 20 Kroner to 200 Kroner per month in 1915/16 (and less in 1909 when the tokens were first issued), the 5 Kroner token was a substantial amount of money.

A new book, Pesca: The History of Compañía Argentina de Pesca Sociedad Anónima by Ian B. Hart sheds a little more light on these remote issues, and raises a question or two.

“Another consequence of the drunken behavior that emanated from vessels like Claus Horn was for Larsen to issue, in 1909, specially minted coinage for use by the station crews - *grytviksmynnten* or ‘monkey money’ as it was called - which could not be exchanged for ‘goods’ on board ships, as it had no exchange value elsewhere. This local money was minted in zinc (ed. note: actually aluminum) initially of 50 ore, 1 Krone and 5 Kroner denominations in Norwegian currency with the Pesca monogram on the obverse. Larsen commented to Schlieper on 4 July 1910 that ‘the Grytviken money has proved to be very useful, and is used to a great extent by all the floating factories and stations. The only inconvenience is that we have no smaller coin than 50 ore, therefore, I would be obliged if you would mint 1,500 at 10 ore of about 2 cm diameter.’ The coins ceased to be in circulation after June, 1914 when the colonial secretary requested them to be withdrawn and replaced by British and Falkland Islands currency.”

The above gives no indication of how many of the other denominations were minted. In 1909, the population

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EDITORIAL

Unique: 1. having no like or equal; being the only one of its kind. 2. rare; unusual.

Many tokens are rare and unusual. However, they do not truly rank as unique. Unique means it is the only one.

On the front page, we state that the Compañía Argentina de Pesca 5 Kroner token is believed to be unique. Currently, it is the only one known to have survived. This does not mean there are not any more. Just that no others are known.

A unique token is not good for the hobby. If a unique token comes up for auction, only one person is going to be the winner. Others that may have desired that token will have to wait until the new owner decides he doesn't want it any more, or dies (cold but true) for another chance.

Surely there were hundreds or thousands made. One must wonder what happened to the others. It has been suggested that they were thrown in Cumberland Bay. Another one may never turn up, but there is always that hope. Perhaps in the garbage dump at Grytviken, or in a jewelry box in Norway, there is another just waiting for the light of day.

I would actually be very happy to be advised that 5 Kroner is not unique. I find no pleasure in "I've got something you don't."

Part of the lure of collecting is acquisition. The acquisition of a unique token, while exciting, is somewhat of a let-down. It is like reaching the end of a journey. Once that journey is completed, one must set their sights on the next journey.

The most exciting part of this whole process was back in 1989 or so, when I first learned that there were tokens from South Georgia Island. Who would have thought that there would be tokens from this remote sub-antarctic outpost?

We are putting the finishing touches on our article about the unique gold Fairbanks Coin Club medal issued for the 1965 Coin Convention. That will be our lead article next month. We have a few other articles in the works, but always welcome yours! Articles, space fillers and items For the Record are always welcome.

SOUTH GEORGIA RETAKEN



South Georgia Island was invaded and occupied by Argentine forces on April 3, 1982, one day after the invasion of the Falkland Islands. The medal above depicts British Forces landing from small boats (kayaks). It is 38mm, sterling silver, and appears to be part of a set noting events of the Falklands war.

In the two hour battle, the Royal Marines defending Grytviken and King Edward Point suffered one wounded, while severely damaging the Argentine frigate *Guerrico* with rocket fire, disabling two helicopters and killing about 15 Argentines. The *Guerrico* withdrew out of range, and started shelling the defensive positions. Shortly thereafter, the commanding officer of the Royal Marines surrendered his forces.

On April 25, following the bombardment of selected positions, the Royal Marines landed, and the Argentine garrison at King Edward Point surrendered without firing a shot. The Argentines at Leith Harbor surrendered the next day, completing the liberation of South Georgia.

Source: *The Island of South Georgia*, Robert Headland, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

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A *WHALE* OF A TOKEN, Cont.

of South Georgia was 720, with 150 at Grytviken. By 1914, the population of South Georgia had grown to 1700 in the summer and 500 in the winter. No figures were given separately for Grytviken. With an increase like this, one must wonder if further mintings took place.

When Larsen states that the Grytviken money “**is used to a great extent by all the floating factories and stations,**” is this an indication that the tokens were used all over the island? It is likely that the other stations had a problem with drunken behavior, thus giving Pesca an operational advantage if only their people were using the tokens and staying sober. However, the book points out several other areas of cooperation that were not necessarily to Pesca’s advantage. This cooperation, primarily at the instigation of Larsen and at times contrary to the wishes of the board of directors in Argentina, was a survival mechanism. As with most remote communities, neighbors helped each other, with the reasonable expectation that when they needed help, it would be reciprocated.

This is confirmed in the “Allardyce Papers” held by the Scott Polar Research Institute, in an internal note from Captain (later Major) J. Quayle Dickson “The manager of the CAP has agreed to withdraw from circulation all the ‘monkey money’ as soon as (British) coinage is in circulation...At present the ‘monkey

money’ is used to a great extent by all the stations and floating factories.”¹

Major J. Quayle Dickson, the administrator and colonial secretary was the first official of the Falkland Islands government to visit South Georgia. He left Stanley on April 4, 1914 arriving at Grytviken on April 8. Apparently, after his visit, he saw fit to request the withdrawal of the tokens. If the tokens were being used throughout the island, this fact could have prompted his banning of the tokens in June after his return to Stanley on May 27.

¹This is courtesy of Mr. Ian B. Hart, via Ms. Jane Cameron of the Falkland Islands Government Archives.

For more information on Compañía Argentina de Pesca, see the January 1990 issue of ATC&PN (available for \$1.50 from ARC) and the two books below.

References:

- Pesca - The History of Compañía Argentina de Pesca Sociedad Anónima of Buenos Aires*, Ian B. Hart, 2001.
- The Island of South Georgia*, Robert Headland, 1984.

Below:

The last issue of stock of Compañía Argentina de Pesca, 1958.



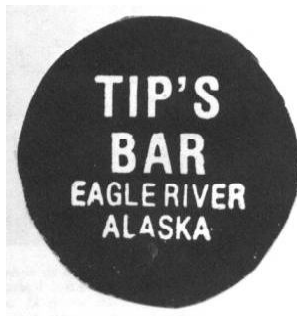
FOR THE RECORD



ADAK: Adak Alaska counterstamped into a 1942 Half Dollar (submitted by Ron Mui).



KETCHIKAN: Derby Room. Black on white plastic, 41mm (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



EAGLE RIVER: Tip's Bar. Uniface, white on black plastic, 38mm (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



PETERS CREEK: American Legion Post 33. Set of two 41mm uniface plastic tokens: black on blue and gold on lime green (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



FAIRBANKS: Boatel Bar, Borrowed from the... Just off Airport Road on a gravel pit, I believe the original structure is a boat. Gold on green plastic, 38mm (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



SITKA: Pioneer Bar, good for one free draft, wine or well drink. Gold on red plastic, 41mm. (K. Hawk).



FAIRBANKS: Ice Dogs, 2001-2002 Season. Black on green plastic, 32mm. The Ice Dogs are an AWWHL Junior A (I think) hockey team (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



ALASKA AIRLINES: Gold Coast Service. Brass, bifacial, about 25mm.

FAIRBANKS GOLD RUSH CENTENNIAL 2002



Help us celebrate the 100th anniversary of the discovery of gold in the Fairbanks District!

When the *Lavelle Young* dropped E.T. Barnette on the banks of the Chena River in 1901, little did he expect to be founding the largest city in interior Alaska. From the tent and cabin trading post, Fairbanks has grown to be the transportation hub of central and northern Alaska.

Felix Pedro visited “Barnette’s Cache” in 1901 to stock up on supplies for the winter. In 1902, on his claim on Pedro Creek, about 12 miles north of Barnette’s trading post, Pedro made his discovery that would start yet another Alaska gold rush.

The obverse of our Fairbanks Gold Rush Centennial medal features the *Lavelle Young* in front of Barnette’s trading post on the banks of the Chena. Gold Dredge No. 8, now a National Historic Site, is depicted on the reverse of the medal. It is located in the Gold Stream Valley about 10 miles from Felix Pedro’s discovery claim on Pedro Creek. The medal was designed by local Fairbanks artist Ray Bonnell.

The medal is 1 ounce pure silver. It is priced at \$24.95, plus \$3 postage and handling per order.

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ALASKA MINT 2002 GOLD RUSH MEDAL

We received our first shipment of the Alaska Mint’s 2002 Alaska Gold Rush Centennial medal just before going to press. This medal features Felix Pedro on the obverse with his mule in the background. The standard Alaska Gold Rush Centennial reverse die was used.

This medal is available in proof, one ounce silver for \$30 and in gold relief one ounce silver for \$59.95. Both have a small gold nugget in the gold pan. Please add \$3 postage per order (may be combined with other items).

Send orders to: A.R.C., P.O. Box 72832, Fairbanks, AK 99707



Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Liberation of South Georgia

Twenty years ago the island of South Georgia was liberated following the illegal occupation of the Island by the Argentines. The island was invaded before the Falklands, it was also liberated before them, and on the 26th of April the handful of people on the Island commemorated the event.

A short church service, lead by the BAS Base Commander Steve Brown, was held in the old whalers church at Grytviken. The congregation of BAS and Government employees was joined by some of the crew from the tug Condor and members of the OSRL (Oil Spill Response Limited) team who are at Grytviken cleaning oil out of the old sealing wrecks.

After the service everyone walked to the cemetery. On a still but snowy morning a wreath was laid on the central cross and a minute's silence observed in memory of all who had died in 1982.

A second wreath was laid on the grave of Argentine Felix Artuso. He was the only casualty of the liberation of South Georgia.

The commemoration was made more poignant with the presence of two men who had been involved in the Liberation of South Georgia and the Falkland Islands. John Morris, Captain of the Condor came to South Georgia only days after the Liberation on the tug "RMS Typhoon". The vessel was used, amongst other things, to survey various South Georgia harbours, pick up airdrops of vital stores sent in by Hercules aircraft, assist moving troops between the "QE2" and "Canberra" and was involved in an attempt to salvage the stricken Argentine submarine Santa Fe.

The chef from "Condor", Barry Bellows, had been on "Elk" a ro-ro vessel in the Falklands. A light snow began to fall as hot toddies were handed round to warm everyone after the ceremonies. A group stood in crisp snow listening to Captain John reminisce about his previous visit twenty years before.

— Pat & Sarah Lurcock South Georgia

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